

YOUR GUIDE TO OBSCURE HORROR AND EXPLOITATION ON VIDEOTAPE

VIDEOOZE™

NUMBER FIVE FIVE DOLLARS (US)



The Bloody Countess

plus • euro-trash reviews • suzy kendall
video mail order • and boatloads more



Having stumbled onto a houseful of cannibals, it looks like Paul Naschy's troubles are just beginning! Still from *Human Beasts/El carnaval de las bestias* (1980), directed by the man himself.

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VIDEOOZZE™

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Your Guide to
Obscure Horror
and Exploitation
on Videotape

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editorial



Alive and Kicking

HI FOLKS! SORRY ABOUT the big gap between this issue and the last, but 1993 has been a busy year for me. In addition to the demands of "daddyhood" (with a second child on the way), I've taken on new responsibilities at my day job, bought a house in the suburbs (so it's weekends with a gasoline-powered lawnmower for me), been going to night school (to learn Italian) and done three guest stints on a local public access cable TV talk show (to gab about Paul Naschy, Lucio Fulci and Klaus Kinski. [Regarding that last item, the show has yet to air a single episode [but the creators tell me we're getting closer everyday].] With things finally settling down enough for me to get out the issue you're now holding in your hands, I couldn't be happier! I've been warned that publishing can be addictive, and having gone through withdrawal for over a year, I believe it! But enough of that. I've got to make up for a lot of lost time, so let's get right down to it!

Subtitling. By now, many of you are aware of the fact that Video Search of Miami has taken scores of foreign horror films — never before available in English — and subtitled them. The man behind it all, Tom Weissner (bar none,

the most influential writer/publisher working in the genre today), has created a hell of a lot of work for the rest of us as we now scramble to reassess these films [a challenge that I, personally, am up to]. Some of the revelations are astonishing! For instance, how many of you who have watched the French language version of *The Awful Dr. Orloff* know where Morfo came from? (He was an executed criminal who raped and killed his parents!) Or how about the dirt on the Howard Vernon character in the Spanish print of *Howl of the Devil*? (He worked in a morgue until some of the students caught him violating a corpse. . . and poured acid over his hands!!) To say the least, these movies take on a new slant when you can understand what the hell is going on! I'm excited about this development, and would like to see it continue, so if you want to throw in your support, call Tom at 305/279.9773 and place your orders now.

Spaghetti Westerns. I love 'em. Not what I cover here in these pages, but I find that watching them helps me with the horror films, as many stars have worked in both genres and there is a great deal of crossover. When the aforementioned Mr. Weissner's

book, SPAGHETTI WESTERNS — THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE VIOLENT, was published by McFarland and Company last year, I was blown away by the work that must have gone into a project such as this! You'll not find another book on the subject (in English) that is as comprehensive as this one is, so I heartily recommend that you go out and buy a copy immediately if you haven't already done so. This book should do for western fans what Phil Hardy's ENCYCLOPEDIA did for horror buffs. [Namely, make you aware of a lot of stuff you never knew existed!] You get over 500 reviews, plus sections with filmographies covering actors, actresses, directors, musical composers, cinematographers and the like. Some of what you'll find may surprise you. [For instance, did you know that Lucio Fulci made three — count 'em — three westerns?] Copies are \$47 postpaid. Write to McFarland at Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640, or call 919/246.4460 for more details.

OBSESSION. While we're on the subject of books, have you seen this one? Besides the articles, interviews, and photos it's jammed with, I found the definitive (God, I hope so!) book on Spanish director



Tony Kendall and Esperanza Roy attempt to restrain Lone Fleming in Amanda de Ossorio's second "Blind Dead" movie, *El esque de los muertos sin ojos* (U.S. title: *The Return of the Evil Dead*).

Jess Franco is a fun read just for some of the more obscure discoveries you'll make. While perusing the entry for *Los blues de la calle pop*, it dawned on me that most of the main characters were named after well-known brands of American cigarettes (Marlboro, Winston, etc)! The authors seem to have listed every film Franco ever had a connection with [no matter how tenuous (try to find his name in the credits for *Castle of the Creeping Flesh*!)] and, quite amazingly, the book also chronicles completed films that haven't been released (*Scarlet*), as well as those that never made it all the way into the can (*El miste-*

rio del castillo rojo). Published by Selbstverlag Frank Trebbin in Germany, copies can be obtained more easily — for those of you in the U.S. at least — through Tim and Donna Lucas of VIDEO WATCHDOG. Call 513/471.8989 for ordering info.

Grace Renat Alert. Back in VIDEOOZE #2, Nathan Miner reviewed an "El Santo" movie called *La furia de los karatecas* which featured a full-breasted starlet who has long since been identified as the one-and-only Grace Renat. While poking around the various Latino vid-clubs in my area, I've come across a dozen other titles where she puts in an

appearance, and thought I'd break out a few of them here for your amusement. Among the best were *Bestias juveniles II* and *El rey del talon*. In the former (a gritty crime flick from the late '70s by Jose Antonio de la Loma), Grace is the amorous housemate of a pair of JDs (one a prostitute, the other a petty thief). *El rey del talon* (translation: *The King of the Bordello*) is a south-of-the-border prison yarn directed by Javier Duran, and is loaded with hilarious sex, as a guy with a penchant for dressing like a hooker gets himself tossed in the slammer. He ends up in a cell with Grace Renat (strutting around

either in her underwear or topless), but the fun really starts when she and her roomies figure out he's an hombre!

The Next Wave? Who wouldn't want to see another Spanish horror boom? Amanda de Ossorio is reportedly shopping around a script for the fifth "Blind Dead" film *El Necronomicon de los Templarios*. Believe it or not, he's been unable to interest Spanish producers in the property, so he's looking for American backing. Anybody got an address and/or phone number for a legit film or video producer who might be a likely candidate for Euroco-productions? ■



I LOVED THE STILL FROM *Fangs of the Living Dead* featuring a pre-Twinkles Anita Ekberg. I saw *Fangs* on that wonderful "Orgy of the Living Dead" triple bill (with that funny promotional campaign). Going to the drive-in was fun then. Haven't been to a drive-in since '83. Anyway, all those sexy women in *Fangs* (particularly Adriana Ambesi and Diana Lorys [And, don't forget Rossana Yanni! —Ed.]) held my interest then and now.

Conrad Widener
South Connellsville, PA

LORNE MARSHALL'S article on the differences between *Lisa* and *The Devil* and *The House of Exorcism* made this VIDEO WATCHDOG contributor green with envy — kudos to Lorne on an excellent piece of work! The other work in the issue was very good as well. Here are a few bits. . . Deviation was released on video in Canada by a company called Prima Films. I sent a copy of this version to Tim Lucas and he said that it was identical to the copy of the Venezuelan edition he had received from Craig Ledbetter, so there's some question as to which edition is the legitimate one. SP-mode copies of *The People Who Own the Dark*

were issued about ten years ago by Sun Video (U.S.) and Vogue Video (Canada), both are very hard to find. I find the film to be surprisingly effective; the sequences with the blind attacking a la *Night of the Living Dead* work quite well and the movie improves considerably after a poor opening reel.

John Charles
Ontario, CANADA

A longtime correspondent (who prefers to remain anonymous) had some fascinating commentary regarding *The People Who Own the Dark* that I can't resist sharing here. He found it difficult to think of a better example of how suddenly and completely the "Spanish Horror Boom" ended when the dictator Franco died. This film was one of the last of that cycle, entering production as *Planeta ciego* ("Blind Planet"). Franco's death in 1975 brought both the end of film censorship in Spain (where previously even a bare breast was taboo) and the collapse of the horror film market as well. Sexy films, now legal — not to mention infinitely cheaper to produce — became the new cinematic cash-crop. The horror boom was over just like that. (Amusingly,

former Exorcismo director Juan Bosch summed up the post-Franco sentiment in the very title of his film *Cuarenta años sin sexo* — "Forty Years without Sex!") A sci-fi title like *Planeta ciego* would have been the kiss of death, hence, the title change to *Ultimo deseo* ("Last Desire") accompanied by a wholly deceptive ad campaign which sought to exploit the orgy sub-plot to the fullest while avoiding any reference to the sci-fi nature of the film! The original publicity materials were all incredibly vague and deliberately misleading. Actress Nadiuska was a big name in erotic films at the time, so it's hardly surprising that one of the catchlines read "The extraordinary Nadiuska in the best role of her career". . . anyone lured to the cinema by that line would probably not expect to see her battling homicidal blindmen for the bulk of the picture! —Ed.

AT THE RECENT "Chiller Theatre" Expo in New Jersey, I was immediately attracted by the cover-photo of #4 and the promise of an article dealing with one of my favorite films by one of my favorite directors — Mario Bava's *Lisa* and *The Devil*. The

intriguing analysis by Lorne Marshall was really top-notch. For many fans of the film (and I AM one of those few who vividly recall viewing LD on late-night television years ago), it was vastly interesting to see its comparison to *The House of Exorcism*. I was also quite pleased to see that Mr. Marshall did not entirely shun HE — for it has some of the most hysterical possession dialogue and scenes ever.

Michael Yaccarino
Clifton, NJ

A CORRECTION REGARDING Louis Paul's *Le foto di Gioia* review: *Teresa* is not a Tinto Brass film. It is an unwatchable (I wonder how he can recommend it to anyone!) 1987 comedy directed by Dino Risi, and co-starring Luca Barbareschi (*Cannibal Holocaust*, *Cut and Run*). Serena Grandi (who had met Eastman before *Le foto di Gioia*, as he ripped and munched on her fetus in *Antropophagus*) achieved immense popularity, in Italy, with a different Tinto Brass film titled *Miranda*

Opposite page: What a cast! Serena Grandi, Debora Caprioglio and Dametra (Valentina) Hampton in Saint Tropez-Saint Tropez.



AUGUSTO CAMINITO and GIUSEPPE GIOVANNINI
present

SAINT TROPEZ SAINT TROPEZ

SERENA GRANDI ALBA PARIETTI DEBORA CAPRIOGLIO

JERRY CALA'

MAURIZIO MICHELI

FABRIZIO BRACCONERI

with

DEMETRA HAMPTON

STEPHANE FERRARA

Produced by AUGUSTO CAMINITO and GIUSEPPE GIOVANNINI

Directed by CASTELLANO e PIPOLO

[1985]. She got to display her humongous bosom in virtually every other film she was eventually cast in: look for her bigger-than-ever boobs in Sergio Corbucci's otherwise-awful comedy *Rimini Rimini*, which she acted in when she was 4-months pregnant!

Simone Romano
Pordenone, ITALY

I ENJOYED LOUIS' REVIEW of the Lamberto Bava film. Last week I read an article in the SCOTTISH DAILY EXPRESS about an Italian actress having her hand injured in a stunt. Despite the tardy journalism, I think the following extract (See inset below. —Ed.) refers to Serena Grandi, don't you?

Neil Kerr
Edinburgh, SCOTLAND

REGARDING STEVE Fentone's review of *Tomb of Torture*: the film was available as a legitimate pre-record from a small label that only seemed to include about six titles. They also released *Cave of the Living Dead*, *Valley of the Eagles* [early borderline sci-fi with Chris Lee in a SMALL role], and I think

the 1927 *King of Kings* (!). I'm pretty sure the label was called Modern Sound Pictures Inc., and they all came in high visibility red-and-yellow plastic boxes with pressbook art covers.

Tim Murphy
El Monte, CA

I RECENTLY SAW THAT Video Gems cut of *Next Victim*. First of all, only the box had that title, the print sported the original *Next!*. Second, did you know there is ANOTHER film on video called *Next Victim*, this one on the IVE label! It's a British murder-mystery starring Carroll Baker. Third, I was struck by how ABSOLUTELY FUCKING STUPID that ending is. How did having Fenech standing by the side of the road give the police the evidence they needed to catch George and Neal? I wasn't aware that her standing there made them say anything incriminating, nor that the police could hear what they were saying in the car in the first place. FUCKING IDIOTIC SHIT!

Lorne Marshall
Glen Burnie, MD

JUST PICKED UP THE most recent issue of your

'zine — and, as usual, it's great! [I'm especially a fan of the "mini-profile" column, I can't wait for the Suzy Kendall piece.] If I may nitpick, though: in your editorial ("Digging for Treasure on TV") you mention several great films that you've duped from cable (*Vampire and the Ballerina*, *Hercules Against Moloch*, etc), but neglect to say where you got 'em from [namely, TNT]. Please feel free to plug TNT! As you can probably tell from our programming [MONSTERVISION on the last Saturday night of every month, 100% WEIRD! every Friday after midnight], we're a network run by movie fans, and there's nothing we'd like more than bringing more folks to our library of films.

Phil Oppenheim
Turner Network Television
Atlanta, GA

I'll be the first one to admit how valuable TNT has been over the past couple years. You guys continue to provide superior prints of everything from Antonio Margheriti space operas to rarely seen Filipino mad doctor movies. Keep up the good work Phil, and my apologies for the oversight.

—Ed.

Tentazione [1987] as well as horror films [e.g. *Spettri/Specters* [1986] together with Donald Pleasance]. She was in Italy for several years, and worked as a model as well, but she's since returned to Denmark, gotten her breasts enlarged, fallen in love with an unsuccessful (he's in jail) bank robber, and her father is host on the most popular film review program in Danish television. To think that her career started with her being chosen as "Miss Sunshine" in a Danish weekly magazine! Right now, she's mostly known for preaching against breast enlargement, because of the danger it causes.

Simon Nielsen
Nørresundby, DENMARK

CONCERNING THE *Weekend Murders*, Francesco DeMasi's score has just been released on compact disc in Italy under its original title. Processed in the Dolby Surround system and running 32 1/2 minutes, it's on the CAM label #CSE 028. They have a soundtrack collector's club and they're always interested in new members. Their address is CAM, Via Virgilio, 8, 00193 Rome, ITALY. AND! They accept personal checks or credit cards! Some sensational scores available through them.

Tim Ferrante
Keyport, NJ

NICE TO SEE LAMBERTO Bava's *Le foto di Gioia* [1987] getting some of the credit it deserves. The poor girl who is stabbed in the stomach with a harpoon is Danish. Her name is Katrine Michelsen. Before this film, she had been in a couple of softcore films (*La bonne* [1986] and

VIDEOOOZE welcomes letters to the editor. Send them to Bob Sargent, P.O. Box 9911, Alexandria, VA 22304, U.S.A.

£2m claim for bag gag
A TOP Italian actress is suing a TV company for £2 million damages after a candid camera stunt misfired. Serena Grande was "attacked" by a fake bag snatcher and fought back, but her finger was caught in a car door and crushed. "It was a stupid joke," said her husband Beppe ERCOLE. "She thought it was real. She's still recovering from the shock."



BLOOD CASTLE (1971)

aka *Scream of the Demon Lover*, *Ivanna Wizard*

THIS FLICK WAS TYPICAL OF THE PRODUCT COMING out of Europe in the early '70s, 19th-century setting (read: castle), lushly photographed, nice costuming, and threats of sadism toward naked (or nearly naked) starlets, all tied together with variable dubbing quality. New World bought the rights for the flick, lopped-off 20 minutes, and released it a year later on the lower bill of the superior *The Velvet Vampire*. The now-defunct Wizard Video released a print which runs about 90 minutes, making it a more complete film than when it had it a U.S. theatrical run.

The film begins moodily enough. At night, a drunk watches a shadowy figure flee from a store. To the drunk's horror, he discovers the corpse of a young girl who has been terribly mutilated. As he runs to the town square and sounds the alarm bell, we cut to see our first shot of Baron Janos (Charles Quincey), who turns upon hearing the alarm as he rides into his castle, accompanied by his hounds. Cut again, and the bell we now are hearing is the school bell, as a coach pulls into the town square next morning. From the coach steps Police Inspector Such and the lovely red-headed beauty, Ivanna Trinko Rokofski (Erna Schurer). "That's four now," mutters an onlooker. "Even the plague only killed two. I say the only answer is to burn the castle to the ground." We see that they are referring to the funeral procession of a slain girl. Ivanna asks to rent a carriage to take her to the castle, but only the grungy-looking Feydor offers a lift (in the cart that just carried the coffin to the funeral!).

As they leave, the mayor of the town intercepts Inspector Such, telling him that last night's killing was the sixth (!) since the death of Ygor, the 7th Baron Dalmar. His brother, Janos, is now the [8th] Baron. They hope the Inspector can solve these grisly murders. Arriving at the castle, Feydor explains to Ivanna that Baron Ygor died when a fire engulfed his lab as he was experimenting on a formula for eternal life. "When they found the good Baron, he looked like the leftovers they left in the oven," quips Feydor. Feydor continues that the girls who have recently been murdered were involved with the present Baron (Feydor, by the way, speaks with a COCKNEY accent! "Lovely innit" and "You'll see, ducky" punctuate his speech, but the names Ivanna,

Feydor, etc, make you believe they're Russian!). Feydor then tries to have his way with Ivanna, but is scared-off when he hears that the Baron's dogs are loose. Acting as if nothing has happened, Ivanna is greeted at the castle gates by Olga, the dark-haired housekeeper. Upon hearing that it is DR. Ivanna who wishes to see the Baron, Olga goes icy and tries to eject her. Luckily for Ivanna, the Baron intervenes, just as a convenient thunderstorm begins.

The housemaid, Christiana (Agostina Belli), is called for and leads Ivanna to her room, hinting that she and Olga are more than employees to the Baron. During dinner, Ivanna notices that the dogs are scarred as if by whipping. This info miffs the Baron. He's all set to send her packing, as he was expecting a male doctor to assist him in continuing his late brother's experiments, but Ivanna is an early woman's-libber and refuses to be dismissed so easily.

Ivanna retires to her room — to study the notes for reviving dead cell tissue — when she suddenly passes out from drinking drugged milk. The last thing she sees is a burnt hand sliding up her body. When she awakens, she is naked and spread-eagled in a dirty cell as an unseen captor threatens her with a heated sword point if she refuses to obey him.

Meanwhile, the Police Inspector is questioning Feydor, tricking him into confessing his attempted rape of Ivanna. This provides the Inspector with an excuse to visit the castle. Ivanna is awakened by Olga, whom she accuses of drugging her milk. Olga politely points out that the milk sits untouched by Ivanna's bedside, and that the Inspector wishes to question her. She meets the police at the gate, but is forbidden to allow them in. She does, however, sign a statement against Feydor, but makes no mention of the strange occurrence of the evening before.

Continuing the experiment, the Baron offhandedly mentions that what Ivanna thought had happened to her was merely an illusion caused by a hallucinogen contained in the chemicals they are using. Ivanna tries to peek into the bubbling crude supposedly containing the corpse of Ygor (basically, a bathtub full of goop), but is stopped by Baron Janos. Despite their bickering, Ivanna and the Baron, in the best Gothic romance tradition, are slowly becoming attracted to one another. The Baron warns Ivanna that she must never enter the part of the castle wherein his brother died, supposedly because the fire rendered it unsafe.



"Ygor" thinks he's going to consummate his brothers' marriage to Erna Schurer for him, from José Luis Marino's *Blood Castle*.

Later that night, Ivanna finds herself awakening upon the slab, naked, as the unseen voice tells her she must remain pure for him. The next morning, she confronts the Baron, suspecting him of playing games, and that he has a problem [I would say so!]. Christiana goes to the stables for some whoopee with the Baron, but moments after they're finished, she is finished-off by a blade-wielding, scarred and burnt maniac. Olga suffers a similar fate after she disrobes. . . by someone she thinks is Janos, but is the same disfigured killer.

The Inspector shows up, ready to arrest the Baron, but Ivanna lies, saying that the Baron was with her all evening. After the Inspector leaves, Ivanna tells the Baron that she believes him to be a split-personality, set off by a combination of the full moon [we were shown throughout the film several shots of the Baron gazing longingly at that celestial satellite in a way that would do Paul Naschy proud] and guilt about his brother's death. Luckily, she still loves him (hub?), even when he plays his games of drugging her and locking her up in a tower.

At hearing of a tower, Janos races off for the damaged part of the castle where he finds his brother Ygor is still alive, though slightly crisped. Brother Ygor feels it is unfair that he cannot enjoy the pleasures of the flesh while Janos revels in it, and so to balance the scales, Ygor kills women in the "heat" of passion. Ygor also wants Ivanna for himself, though she must remain pure and

untouched. Janos grows furious, but Ygor makes some obscure reference to a promise made to their mother about looking after one another. Janos leaves and promptly proposes to Ivanna.

Right after the wedding ceremony, Christiana's father shoots Baron Janos, just as the couple exits the church. Inspector Such disarms the distraught parent as Ivanna rushes her injured hubby back to the castle [one nice touch: several other villagers are seen lurking in dark corners waiting to take a shot at the Baron]. Back in the bridal chamber, Janos confesses to Ivanna that he didn't kill those girls, to which she replies "It doesn't matter to me!" Before they can consummate the marriage, the injured hubby runs downstairs when he hears the evil Ygor is whipping the hounds. Overpowering his brother, Ygor heads for the bridal chamber. When Ivanna realizes that the toasted hand massaging her tummy is not her hubby's, she knocks over a lamp, causing a fire, and a panic in Ygor. Janos rushes in, pushes his brother atop the bridal bed, then races from the room as Ygor dies screaming amid the conflagration.

The film has many inconsistencies. Whose body is in the tub in the lab? What does the elixir of eternal life have to do with the film anyway? What purpose did the moon/lunar connection serve other than to make vague werewolf references? Did Janos know his brother was alive? Why am I puzzling so hard over this film?

Director José Luis Merino was the director of a 1972 Spanish horror film called *Orgy of the Dead* (no relation to the infamous Ed Wood nudie-cutie flick). Actress Agostina Belli exhibited her loveliness in several horror films. After *Blood Castle*, she appeared in Giorgio Ferroni's *The Night of the Devils*. This was followed by the colossal bore *Bluebeard*, in which she was sixth in billing of a cast that included Richard ("God I was smashed") Burton, Raquel Welch, Joey Heatherton, and Sybil Danning as a lesbian madame. As Caroline, Ms. Belli's charms were quite amply displayed. Probably her best-known flick was *The Chosen/Holocaust 2000*. As Sara, she is the object of Kirk Douglas' amorous attention. Also in this surprisingly entertaining *Omen* ripoff was Simon Ward, Anthony Quayle and Adolfo Celi.

Blood Castle — I think I'd rather visit *Fawley Towers* next time.

—Kevin Shinnick

INVESTIGATION OF A CITIZEN ABOVE SUSPICION (1970)

aka Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto
(No U.S. video release)

"How will you kill me this time?"

"I think I'll... slit your throat."

SO BEGINS *INVESTIGATION OF A CITIZEN ABOVE Suspicion*, a movie about a monster in an Armani suit. The monster is authority and power gone amok under the guise of serving the state, and the role is wielded with chilling conviction by Gian Maria Volonte. Created as a social satire, the film would not probably succeed as such with an American audience, originating as we do in a different political and social tradition than the Italy of the 1960s. As a characterization of a sociopathic personality with unlimited power, the film is a stunning success. Concurrent with the "message" of his movie, director Elio Petri delivers a twisted, entertaining story that leaves the viewer with a delightfully creepy sensation.

To the sound of a demented Jew's-harp from the Ennio Morricone score, a Police Inspector (Volonte) calmly slits the throat of his mistress (Florinda Bolkan). With a clear killing purpose, he calmly leaves his fingerprints in several places at the crime scene, leaves bloody footprints where they are sure to be discovered, then methodically removes threads from his blue silk tie and places them under the fingernails of the dead woman. He then calls the police to report the deed. From this startling premise, the story of his relationship with his mistress is told in a series of flashbacks overlaid with his department's investigation of the murder. We discover that the mistress, Augusta Terzi, has a fetish about authority figures, and policemen in particular. Apparently she is a fan of crime-scene photography and has followed the career of the self-promoting Inspector with great interest. Augusta seduces

the Inspector in a series of erotic phone calls and gradually brings out his hidden side. With the creepy clarity of hindsight, we see the foreshadowing of her doom. On the beach one day, she asks him how easy it would be to murder her in broad daylight and get away with it. The Inspector thinks for a second, then outlines exactly how he would do the deed and get away with it in an analytic fashion. Back home, Augusta indulges the Inspector's little peccadillo for reenacting crime-scene photography, all the while encouraging him to dominate her in increasingly brutal and sadistic ways. She laughs and belittles his masculinity when he discovers she has another lover, initiating another scene of domination and servility. At the same time, she instills in him a feeling of ultimate power and the need to abuse his position. While driving around Rome, she convinces the Inspector to run a red light in full view of a traffic cop. "Go ahead," she says, "you can get away with it. You can do anything. You're a policeman." He runs the light, and gets away with it by browbeating a hapless traffic cop. Gradually, we see his feeling of omnipotence and contempt for society grow. And so he puts his new-found ascendancy to the supreme test: he kills his mistress, leaves obvious clues linking him to the crime, and silently dares his own department to find him guilty. By his own reasoning, his position in society (as the newly created "Commissioner for Political Crimes") has elevated him to the point where he is above the law and above suspicion—an almost Nietzschean perspective. At the same time, he is increasingly tormented by subconscious feelings of guilt and his own deep rooted subservience to authority and law. The inner conflict between his notions of power and his respect for justice will end up being his undoing. As the investigation proceeds, the police charged with the investigation first suspect the victim's homosexual ex-husband, then a revolutionary that she had a brief affair with after she started to tire of the Inspector's attentions. As the Inspector abuses his position by meddling with the case to shift suspicion from one suspect to another, we see the conflict within him grow more serious. His subservience to law (with a capital "L") DEMANDS that someone else cannot pay the price for his crime. Why won't the clods that work in his department find him guilty? The denouement of *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* confirms the Inspectors' premise in an unusual fashion that I won't reveal here. Suffice to say that the ending is in line with the director's particular views on society. It is those views that end up engulfing the plot of *Investigation*, as we will see.

Dovetailed in the story of the murder investigation is the portrayal of the Italian police as a brutal, repressive, and almost pathologically violent arm of the state. This should be taken with a grain of salt—when viewing *Investigation*, it's important to remember that Elio Petri was a member of the Communist Party. His depiction of police authority in Italy during the 60s and early 70s is meant as satire, but it comes off just a little too heavy handed. Petri's Italy is a police state little removed from the Italy of *Il Duce*. Policemen are allowed any means at

their disposal to uphold the law and smash "the Revolution," and they use their power in a coarse, flagrant and almost farcical manner, demonstrating a cruel intolerance for anything other than the party line. To a communist in the 60s in Europe, perhaps the "State" would be represented as a faceless edifice painted with the same brush as Orwell's 1984 or Zamyatin's We. In any event, *Investigation* takes such pains to belabor the theme of police brutality that the murder plot is in danger of becoming subtext from time to time during the story. This will not subtract from the viewer's enjoyment of the film, but enhance it. Though the murder of Augusta is the driving force behind the plot, the act of murder is addressed in such analytical terms that we can't help but become distracted about the whole thing and even more repelled by the mundane horror represented by the excesses of the Inspector and the system he represents.

The real strength of *Investigation* is the performance of the central character, the Inspector, a fascinating and complex individual, a sort of anti-protagonist. The central appeal of any story is the empathy we have for the protagonist — but any empathy we have for the Inspector is entirely supplanted by feelings of revulsion rather quickly. As the Inspector, Volonte is by turns charming, persuasive, charismatic, then whining, whimpering, and an ass-kisser — a model bureaucrat. It's ironic that he, of all people, would accuse his professional colleagues of the same failings at the end of the movie, since he has espoused the same ignoble behavior by word and by deed throughout the movie. At the story's beginning, we discover that he has been promoted to head the "Political Crimes" branch of the Italian Police. Petri's intent is clearly satirical here — the Political Crimes Division is a bureaucratic farce tricked out in supposed "state of the art" technology but reduced to counting slogans on walls as a means to predict unrest. Parenthetically, I might add we never really find out much about the so-called "Revolution" in the movie except when we hear some fairly passé Marxist dogma from the students at one point. The whole "movement" looked pretty tepid to me [Perhaps Petri was trying to model the "threat from within" in the fevered imaginations of the Police?]. As head of Political Crimes, the Inspector has wangled a promotion for himself. His former colleagues in Homicide throw a little celebration in his honor. The Inspector is all smiles, glad-handing with his former cronies and patronizing "Inspector Comic Relief," little rotund Pannunzio. When his former subordinate (now in charge of Homicide) attempts to make a congratulatory speech in his honor, the Inspector cuts him short with "Enough Ass-Kissing — let's get back to work!" He plays the bully to his underlings with the same relish he puts into brownnosing his superior in the department. Volonte is such a weather-vane both physically and emotionally that his motivations are hard to equate to any logical pattern. Volonte acts with his whole being in this story — when the Inspector is nervous or cowed, sweat beads on his upper lip and flies off his widow's peak with every gesticulation. He reminded me of former President

Richard Nixon doing a television appearance — all sweaty and twitching maniacally. When the Inspector is demonstrating his ruthless power, you can actually see the veins pulsing in his neck as he rants and raves about his role as the savior of the state — an impressive and complex performance.

As Augusta Terzi, I was less impressed with Florinda Bolkan, a Brazilian actress who showed early promise. Bolkan hams her role mercilessly. Her fetish for authority (and desire to pervert the Inspector) ring tunelessly, as if she is merely going through the motions. Her growing fetish for murder scenes in general, and the Inspector's murder cases in particular, is told in a series of erotically crafted flashbacks that are more a tribute to the directors' skill than her talent. Nevertheless, Bolkan handles a difficult role in workmanlike fashion. Perhaps it's because she is so overshadowed by Volonte and his role that I feel this way — he gets all the good lines at any rate.

In summary, if you decide to watch *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* — and you should, don't be snookered — this is not a traditional horror or exploitation film, nor is it a murder mystery. Elio Petri was a director known for his threading his own agendas in the fabric of his movies. As a committed Communist, he was not above making a subtle propaganda piece [truthfully, this film is about as subtle as a sharp kick in the groin]. The hypocrisy of the establishment is depicted as ludicrous, bombastic and bullying at every turn. The Inspector himself is the principle spokesman for the Status Quo, as he outlines his motives to a political prisoner during an interview: "We police are not the GRU. We police are not the SS. We police are upholders of Democratic Action." Obviously, the police in this movie are anything but an instrument of democratic action. The satirical intent of this statement is made all the more absurd by the fact that the Inspector clearly believes what he is saying is true. This sort of thinly veiled commentary raises (or lowers, depending on your opinion) *Investigation* to the level of political satire/thriller rather than a murder story. Is the film, therefore, worth watching? Undoubtedly. I was delighted with this creepy little movie, and its unlikeable protagonist, from start to finish. Watch, savor, and enjoy.

—Walt O'Hara

DEVIL KISS (1973)

aka *The Perverse Kiss of Satan; La Caresse de Satan*

Home Cinema Corporation

THIS SPANISH-FRENCH CO-PRODUCTION IS ONE OF those horror films that delight Euro-fans and have everyone else shaking their heads in utter stupefaction.

After entertaining the guests at his elegant castle with a gauche fashion show, the Duke de Haussemonet treats them to a seance conducted by a medium, Claire Grandier, a woman who used to be a countess [she renounced her nobility after her regal husband shot him-

self to death [seemingly because he was always being pestered for having married outside his class]. The duke is so impressed with Claire's performance, he expresses his interest in learning the occult from her, so he invites the spiritualist and her companion, Professor Gruber, to stay on in the chateau as his guests.

Not long afterward, while horseback riding on the estate, Claire rescues a vagrant midget from some hunters who are trying to kill him. She brings him back to her room, undressing in front of him and seducing him (there is an implication that they have sex, but that coupling is missing from here). She is actually recruiting him to assist in a revenge plan she has devised, which is the real reason for her wanting to stay in the castle: namely, to avenge her late husband's suicide.

The three of them trek to the local cemetery and, in a pretty uninspired sequence, exhume a car accident victim (even Euro-zealots will agree the *mise en scène* falls a tad short of Colin's and Dwight's expressionistic episode acquiring their subject). Since Professor Gruber is a chemist, he announces he will "put into practice the symbiosis of cellular regeneration," which is a fancy way of describing raising the dead. Although the doctor performs reconstructive facial surgery on the cadaver, its visage is still pretty messed-up, but Gruber thinks it will give his subject "genuine brute force." His injection of microorganisms reanimates the corpse, while Claire recites incantations from the *BOOK OF ASTAROTH* and gorily sacrifices a chicken to conjure a demon, which inhabits the monster. To add to the delirious resuscitation, the multi-talented Gruber, an expert at telepathy, employs his psychic powers to control the creature, but this takes its toll on the professor, who already has a weak ticker and suffers attacks of angina after any strenuous activity.

The zombie's first victim is the duke, whose brother had obtained the count's stable after the nobleman's death (that had really fried Claire's ass). To the dismay of Claire and her associate, the duke's nephew shows up, the legal heir to the property, though fortunately he's also benevolent and lets them stay on. Unfortunately for them, the monster escapes, strangling both the midget and one of the maids. Gruber is able to locate the creature through his psychic link with it, and he warns Claire that their servant may be more than they can handle. Nevertheless, they use it to kill another person, an unseen baron, off-screen.

So as not to draw suspicion, Gruber tries to make everything seem normal in the chateau by reviving the maid before anyone discovers she was murdered, though she doesn't behave quite the same as she used to. When she kills her lover with a pair of scissors, she is sent to a hospital for examination and is determined to be quite dead. Claire and her husband interpret this as their cue to pack up their monster and vamoose, but things don't go quite as they had planned.

While it is a twisted variation of *Frankenstein*, *Devil Kiss* also employs the revenge motif of some of Jess Franco's pictures, most notably *The Diabolical Dr. Z* (1965) and *Sie tötete in ekstase* (1970). Director Georges



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Gigo is unfamiliar to this writer (any reader who has information about Gigo should write me in care of VIDEOOZE), but several of the actors should be recognizable to Spanish horror aficionados: Victor Israel (*Necrophagus*, 1971, many others), Jose Nieto (*Mark of the Wolfman*, 1967), Daniel Martin (*Demon Witch Child*, 1974), Evelyn Scott (Franco's *La Noche de los Asesinos*, 1974), Jose Ruiz Lifante (who was one of the living dead in the brilliant Jorge Grau's *Breakfast at the Manchurian Morgue*, 1974, but, as a pallid butler, looks even more like a zombie here). The evil couple are played by Silvia Solar (*Night of the Howling Beast*, 1975) and Oliver Mathot, who also paired up in two movies that make *Devil Kiss* seem like a worthwhile experience by comparison: Julio (*Sexy Cat*) Taberner's *Cannibal Terror* (1981) and the Paul Naschy crime drama *Crimson* (1971), which actually features about a half-dozen performers from this movie.

HCC's transfer is quite grainy, and there appears to be some censored bits, most obvious with an erotic dream the midget has — before the monster murders him — of Solar (real name: Genevieve Couzain) riding a horse *au naturel*, Lady Godiva-like. Oddly, HCC released two slightly different versions of this movie: in one, the opening credits, sans title, roll along while two of the Duke's house guests dance frenetically to a tribal melody; in the other, video-generated credits run over scenes from a different film (a practice the manufacturer Majestic Home Video frequently employs with their product), allowing HCC to copyright their release, even though their box art is stolen from IVE's *Nightstalker* (aka *Don't Go Near the Park*, 1980), a weirdo Linnea Quigley outing that is actually one of her few bearable efforts.

—Lorne Marshall



The pathetic-looking monster from Georges Gigo's variation on the Frankenstein theme, *Devil Kiss*.

Schoolgirl Tessa (a young Lesley-Anne Down [in her first screen appearance]) is raped on the way home from class, and neither the local police — led by Frank Finlay — or psychiatrist Dr. Lomax (James Laurenson) can find any clues to the identity of her attacker, or get anything coherent from the traumatized and dumb-struck girl. A second victim is attacked two months later, and also murdered. Both girls came from the same school and were assaulted in woodlands nearby. Art teacher, Julie West (one of

Suzy Kendall's better roles), claims to have caught a glimpse of a sinister figure just before the second victim's body was discovered, but she proves an unconvincing witness at the inquest — by describing WHAT she saw as "exactly like the Devil." Naturally, the press are particularly interested in the case, and a sleazoid journalist (Freddie Jones in fine hammy form) keeps Kodak busy and hounds the teacher, offering a blank check for her story. She's protected at first though, from too much tabloid harassment, by the sympathetic Dr. Lomax, who seems to be taking a more-than-professional interest in the whole case. He seems like a nice guy, and doesn't remain a suspect in the audience eyes for very long, but there are quite a number of other potential sex offenders. Prime among these are the school's lecherous book keeper and odd-job man, who fondles girls in the library, keeps a stash of nude photos and is known to take his dog for walks along a woodlands path, or could the culprit be the rather mean and moody hospital administrator?

Dr. Lomax's term as a suspect reaches the verdict stage, when he's seen to drug Julie the art teacher, who's distraught over her involvement in the murder inquiry, and spends the night at her place — but he sleeps on the couch downstairs. Chivalry is not dead after all.

The script — while not exceptional — is at least Agatha Christie literate, and contains one classic line of probably-misplaced humor (it's hard to tell, being delivered so deadpan). When asked if her husband, Lesley (the aforementioned lecher), walks their dog through the nearby wooded common, the stiffly prim school headmistress tells police, "It depends if there's bitch in season."

Events are brought to the point where mystery turns to tension, by Julie's misguided attempt to flush the murderer out of hiding. She sets herself up as a target, with a front page newspaper story saying a drawing of hers (remember, she's an art teacher) will appear which should clearly identify the killer. Although this scheme fails miserably, it does provoke the kidnapping of poor Tessa, when a sodium pentathol experiment to unlock the near

ASSAULT (1970) aka *In the Devil's Garden; The Creepers* (No U.S. video release)

THIS BRITISH MURDER-MYSTERY — BASED ON Kendal Young's novel, *THE RAVINE*, and directed by Sidney Hayers — has been undeservedly labeled as a "predictable thriller" and "run-of-the-mill," but the script by John Kruse is lively and clever while Hayers' satisfactory direction maintains the interest and generated odd moments of eerie atmosphere. The unusual cast, though only notable in retrospect, do well with fairly unpromising material.

catatonic girl's memory threatens to reveal the villain for sure. An attempt on the life of Dr. Lomax, which involves his late night visit to a chemist shop, a pharmacy room full of gas, and a biker (played by David Essex — yes, really!) looking for the shop's light switch with a cigarette lighter, confirms his role as the film's hero and probable saviour of the troubled Tessa.

If you've not yet seen this, skip the next line — where I'll tell you that the killer is the sullen hospital chief. He abducts Tessa and drags her off into the woods again, but with local police in hot pursuit. As is often the case with such pictures, the villain doesn't escape; desperately climbing an electricity pylon, he grabs hold of the wrong cable and gets fried. Justice, it appears, has been done.

Certainly nothing to get excited about, I admit, but *Assault* boasts good performances all round, a skillfully concocted whodunit plot, and sharply observed supervision by Hayers. Though disarming tries are made for a sinister, supernatural mood, the film has no such genuine otherworldly presence. What about the "Devil" seen by the art teacher? Well, this it turns out, is not too convincingly explained by Dr. Lomax as a mere optical illusion caused by red car lights and the momentary appearance of a figure in the evening twilight.

Sidney Hayers returned to the theme of child murder, for the rather more brutal vigilante thriller, *Revenge* (1971), which starred Joan Collins.

—Tony Lee

EL TESORO DE MOCTEZUMA (1966) Video Visa

ALTHOUGH NO LONGER WITH US, SANTO HAS LEFT behind his celluloid legacies which encompass a little over two decades worth of adventure and intrigue. Little is known about this savior of Mexico, although his films sometimes offer a glimpse into the psyche of this being, christened "Santo — el enmascarado de plata." In the case of *El tesoro de Moctezuma*, one has reason for concern over the well-being of Santo's love life. This film pairs for the second time, Santo and actor Jorge Rivero, who tries his best to be Mexico's answer to James Bond. Rivero's handsome, daring secret agent first appeared alongside our masked hero in the same year's *Operacion 67*. Both films were probably shot back-to-back by prolific director Rene Cardona, and offer plenty of exciting scenes, a la 007.

A James Bondish ripoff credits sequence which features multiple images of gun-toting Rivero and wrestling Santo, backed by a jazzy music score kicks off *El tesoro de Moctezuma*, which sends our duo in search of the stolen treasure of the titular Aztec emperor. The men responsible this time around have invented a freeze-ray which allows access to any guarded building once its armed guards have been frozen in place. After demonstrating the ray's effectiveness in a museum heist, the action begins as the thieves are pursued by two motorcycle cops. Once the bandits pull over, the police wisely

pull up and dismount directly in front of the car. You can almost discern a sly look of satisfaction on behalf of the car's occupants as the driver simply stomps on the gas to rid themselves of this inconvenience.

In the midst of all these goings-on are Santo and Rivero, currently engaged in a tag-team wrestling bout. Among the spectators is a curvaceous brunette who steals away from the crowd and takes the opportunity to ransack the shared residence of Rivero and Santo, in search of a large diamond which they possess. Her search is unsuccessful, and culminates in a fistcuffs between our tag-team champs and the brunette's husky "chaperones." With the aid of a gas bomb/earring the trespassers make a clean getaway. What looks to be a struggle over the possession of a very large diamond (for whatever reason possessed by Rivero) is abandoned halfway through the film. Hell, the bad guys decide to let Rivero keep his crummy diamond; they decide to go for broke and seek their own fortune in the undiscovered tomb of the mighty Montezuma.

The viewer is next confronted with an intimate scene that reveals the torment which follows our silver masked man. His partner is quite the ladies man, and is shown "entertaining" his latest fancy via a television monitor. This monitor sits in Santo's secret lab, where he's shown to be a high tech Peeping Tom; watching his partner's every move through a special diamond brooch that allows each partner to monitor the whereabouts of the other. Your heart cries out for Santo, whose desire to feel the touch of soft female flesh is not shared by the opposite sex, who cringe at the thought of snuggling up against that rough, silver nylon! Poor Santo. Abandoned to eavesdrop on his partner's passionate displays of affection while he can only dream of being held in a woman's arms. This problem proves almost fatal when Santo anxiously makes his way towards what he perceives to be a woman, impatiently awaiting his company atop one of the Aztec ruins. Santo's urgent search for affection almost lands him in the world beyond when he discovers that his dream girl is nothing more than a mannequin lined with explosives. Blammo! The opposition must have been aware of this weakness. . .

Meanwhile, debonair Jorge Rivero sits with his girlfriend (south-of-the-border cutie Amedee Chabot, featured in the following year's *Autopsia de un fantasma*) at ringside during a bullfight. Of course, privacy and relaxation are unknown terms to a secret agent, as Rivero soon finds out. Two troublemakers in thin black ties pursue Jorge through the stadium, finally trapping him on both sides of a scaffold, which runs across a pit of lively bulls. A seemingly hopeless situation is saved by the sudden appearance of Santo, who hoists one of the bad guys over the side of the walkway, into the pit of ungulates below. This results in a hilarious "watch the dummy get gored by a bull" scene.

Let's the film end too quickly, all the action is interspersed with static shots of Santo and company standing around in the secret laboratory, wearing white lab coats. But before long, the patient viewer is rewarded with a

scene of Santo being chased through an underground garage with no less than five cars in pursuit, one of which is firing a machine gun! One is never sure exactly WHY the bad guys are so intent on rubbing-out Santo and Rivero, who seem to be doing little in the film but wrestling and hanging out in the lab. [Perhaps this is what the Mexican underworld does for entertainment?] Anyway, from here the film jumps to an archaeological dig, where a band of unsavory characters successfully locate the tomb of Montezuma. Inside the tomb, riches abound, and plans are afoot to transport the loot to Hong Kong, where it will be auctioned off to the highest bidders.

Naturally, Santo and Rivero somehow get wind of these plans, and begin an aerial search of the coastal waterways in their well-equipped, rocket-launching Piper Cub. When our crime-fighting duo happen to buzz past a battleship(!) they wisely assume that this must be the shipment of Montezuma's treasure, and begin to dive bomb the ship, whose many guns roar in defiance. Santo's missiles miss their mark, and several cutaway shots reveal Rivero looking at Santo as if to say, "Are you nuts?" A few shots finally down the plane, leaving our intrepid do-gooders to parachute into the waters below. No sooner do they drop into the depths, when they find themselves pursued by a speedboat with a machine gun. Somehow, Santo and Rivero not only manage to out-swim their antagonists, but Santo even manages to attach a small explosive to the underside of the craft, turning the boat into a towering shower of smoke and splinters. Our waterlogged champs are then rescued from stock footage of many a hungry shark by the convenient arrival of Rivero's girlfriend (last seen left behind at the bullfights) aboard her boat.

Whew! As if all this action weren't enough, one last stop aboard the "Montezuma Express" lands us in Hong Kong where the stolen loot is discovered and recovered after a ridiculous point-blank gun battle, where machine guns prove no match for a few well-placed shots by Santo and Rivero's handguns. Amidst the flying lead stumbles Rivero's girlfriend, who ends up with a bellyful after jumping in front of Santo to save his life. Rivero drops beside his girl in anguish, while one wonders if Santo felt some sort of twisted satisfaction at the death of Rivero's squeeze, who gave her life for him, and not that baby-faced Romeo. Poor, poor Santo. Painful biographical information aside, *El tesoro de Moctezuma* gets a hearty A+ for action and entertainment. Move over James Bond, Santo has arrived.

—Nathan Miner

A BAY OF BLOOD (1971)

aka Twitch of the Death Nerve; Ecologia del delitto

MPI

SEAN CUNNINGHAM TOOK A LOT OF CREDIT FOR his exceedingly unhealthy-looking "bodycount" movie —

Friday the 13th. It was a film of little ambition, invention or application, but appealed to the mindless majority who were only really interested in seeing copious amounts of graphic bloodletting and very little else. Consequently, the film did phenomenally well at the box office and, inevitably, scores of other two-bit directors followed suite by churning out a plethora of seriously inept potboilers of which perhaps only Tony Maylam's *The Burning* (1980) can claim to be of any value. New lows were reached with the completely execrable *Just Before Dawn* (1980) and even that was surpassed with Paul Lynch's wretched and amateurish *Hamongous* (1981). Sadly, even Ruggero Deodato — a director I, personally, profess to have much admiration for — chipped in with his instantly forgettable and totally unimpressive "slasher" — *Bodycount* (1987). Not even a manic David Hess could save this one from eternal damnation!

The whole "stalk n' slash" genre, it's true to say, only really took off after *Friday the 13th* had been released, but to really gain some perception of how *Friday the 13th* came about, one would have to look back almost a decade to Mario Bava's unassuming little thriller *Ecologia del delitto*.

Although by no means a masterpiece, Bava's amusingly-titled picture showed great perception by the Master, but in all honesty, Bava could not have expected his simple giallo to be emulated tenfold almost a decade later. While Mario Bava was the perennial genius of the Italian cinema, he was not immune to the harsh economics that other European directors were faced with. Italian producers were more concerned with what was good box office in the USA or Britain than what homegrown directors could produce. Aside from his masterful and beautifully directed debut — *La maschera del demonio* (1960) — Bava was forced to produce numerous giallos, sci-fi efforts (*Planet of the Vampires* — still an exceptional film and an obvious influence to Ridley Scott's *Alien*) and several languid peplum offerings. Occasionally, Bava chose to direct what he wanted, but after dubbing, re-titling, and editing, many of these films were rendered incomprehensible and unlike the films that they were advertised to be. A good example of this was *Lisa e il diavolo* (1972). This started out as a 113 minute film, but was reduced to 93 minutes after cuts, had scenes of Elke Sommer vomiting frogs added, and was re-titled *La casa dell'exorcismo* to cash in on the popular Exorcist.

While made with some precipitancy, *Ecologia del delitto* holds up very nicely indeed. It is both intriguing and captivating. The plot is cleverly constructed and contains plenty of surprises. This is in marked contrast to the hideous slasher films that nearly all featured one killer mathematically slaughtering rebellious teenagers in a summer camp. Bava instead uses various members of the cast to kill each other off. The motive for murder is not purely insanity or a need on the director's part to embody a display of gory special effects, but an ecological and psychological basic human desire for possession. On this basis, the storyline is far more acceptable and not insulting to the intelligence.

Granted *Ecologia* is particularly violent and gory, the visceral aspects take a backseat and contribute quietly to the action. The cleverly interwoven plot concerns a power struggle between the protagonists over a seemingly idyllic piece of land, "the bay." Murder is the inevitable outcome as each person is killed by another. A sort of chain reaction occurs as the plot twists and turns towards a dramatic climax.

The film opens with a form of prologue in which a wheelchair-bound woman (Isa Miranda) is strangled and hung by a well-dressed male assailant. The killer is then, in turn, murdered himself by another person whose identity is kept a secret. This is a promising start which Bava uses to lay his first plot twist. The whole set piece is atmospheric, enhanced by an excellent use of light and the inclusion of an eerie soundtrack over the obligatory thunderstorm. Bava achieves a particularly striking scene where Miranda's pained expression is illuminated by the lightning. The old lady, it is revealed later, was a countess who owned the bay surrounding her mansion. Since her murder, the bay becomes available to prospective purchasers. This then provides the rest of the cast with a motive for murder as they "compete" in a power struggle for possession of the bay.

An unscrupulous property developer, Ventura (Chris Avram) and his concubine "squeak," want to buy the land and transform it into an amusement park. A local entomologist, Mr. Fusadi, is concerned about the disastrous effects that Ventura's plans will have on the bay's wildlife. What's more, Fusadi is prepared to stop Ventura at all costs. Fusadi's wife (Laura Betti), a neglected clairvoyant, predicts doom for the bay's inhabitants. . .

Simon is the bastard son of the deceased Countess. He spends his time as a recluse, fishing for squid in the bay. He is openly brusque and critical of both Ventura and Fusadi. His suspicions, combined with his perturbing behavior also make him a prime suspect for murder.

Each character has a brief introduction, and as the film progresses, they are developed very nicely. The viewer is able to gauge their personalities and thus make judgements over who they believe to be the

killer. Bava also throws in a quartet of disposable characters, namely a group of students (cannon fodder in your usual slasher!), two males and two females. They arrive in the bay with the stereotypical intention of getting drunk and laid. Contemptible attitudes? Bava seemed to think so, his Catholic upbringing probably taught him better, or maybe it was simply the garish seventies attire and bouffant hair styles that did it? They all meet horrible deaths: the Leo Sayer lookalike has a machete plunged into his face, the blond girl (Brigitte Skay of *Holocauste Nazi* infamy) swims naked in the bay's cold uninviting waters and discovers a corpse floating in the murk. This is another impressive set piece, well set out and elegantly choreographed. The girl emerges from the water only to be pursued by an unknown party who then slices her down with the same machete used to kill the other student. The remaining two are then killed, skewered to a bed with a spear. This was a scene that was to be emulated almost exactly in *Friday the 13th Part II*.

The murders continue with aplomb, each killing leading to another turn in the plot. The final twist (involving Luigi Pistilli and Claudine Auger) occurs right at the end of the film which I won't go into as it would spoil it if you haven't had the chance to view it yet. Suffice it to say that it follows in the tradition of the rest of the film — absurd and unexpected!

For its time, *Ecologia del delitto* is a strong film in terms of violence and on-screen gore, indeed it bears up quite respectably next to gorefests like *The Burning*, etc, although the effects are risible when compared to Tom Savini's work. *Ecologia* features thirteen murders (described by the American poster advertisements as "13 moments of intense shock!"), a high body count for 1971. Strangely enough though, the film would be equally as interesting even without so many on-screen murders, a compliment to Mario Bava's skills as a director, and also a poke-in-the-eye for the insufferable *Friday the 13th* series.

On *La maschera del demonio*, Bava acted as his own cinematographer, but was unable to set a precedent for the films that followed in later years. With *Ecologia*, his usually reliable camera work is sadly depleted and severely



A splendid foreign press sheet for Mario Bava's *A Bay of Blood* created by the great Spanish artist, Janó.

restricted to only a few brief flashes of his illimitable skills. Fluidity and refinement make way for cost-effective zooms. The shots of the mist-shrouded bay are superbly atmospheric, but along with the aforementioned opening scene and the corpse-in-the-lake sequence, are too few and far between.

Ecologia del delitto, though certainly not a flawless masterpiece, is rousing and gratifying. Its importance to the fans of the nefarious stalk n' slash genre can not be underestimated. It was obviously the main influence behind *Friday the 13th*. There are too many similarities to argue to the contrary. Despite such similarities, the films are like chalk and cheese — Bava's film being far superior to Cunningham's abhorrent abortion in terms of style, storyline, and basic enjoyment. *Ecologia* was never one of the master's greatest moments. Like so much of his other works, it was perpetually in the shadow of *La maschera del demonio*. Bava found himself in the position of setting a precedent that he could never match, something that most directors avoid... unless your name is Lamberto Bava of course.

—Nigel Bartlett

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE VAMPIRES (1962) aka *La stage dei vampiri* Sinister Cinema

THIS WAS THE LAST OF A TRIO OF VAMPIRE FILMS starring Walter Brandi (someone should interview Walter if he's still around). The others are Renalto Polselli's *The Vampire and the Ballerina* and Piero Regnoli's *The Playgirls and the Vampires*. All three have their share of eroticism, but *Slaughter* is the most straightforward, relying less on titillation (steamy dance numbers featuring full-bodied Italian women) and more on the traditional vampire tale.

When his female companion is killed, a vampire (Dieter Eppler from *Blood Demon*) sets out to find a new bride. His choice is Louise (Graziella [be-still-my-heart] Granata), wife of Wolfgang (Brandi, who you can also see in *Bloody Pit of Horror*, *Terror Creatures from the Grave*, and *The Saracens*). Louise is drawn to the vampire's strong sexual power (what is it about vampires and their strong sexual power?). After a brief seduction, the blood ghouls fangs Louise. With Louise growing weaker each day, the family doctor sends a fretting Wolfgang to find a specialist, Dr. Schneider (Paolo Solvay). Schneider knows a vampire is at work (he's probably good friends with Van Helsing). Unfortunately, the pair arrive to find Louise dead. Now a blood drinker, Louise would like Wolfgang to join the world of vampires and bites him. Luckily, a blood transfusion from a friend, Peter (Alfredo Rizzo, also in *The Vampire and the Ballerina*, *The Playgirls and the Vampire*, *Bloody Pit of Horror* and *It Started in Naples*), saves Wolfgang. Still thirsty for plasma, Mr. Vampire plants a bloody hickey on Wolfgang's maid, Corinne. Unscathed through all the biting, the intrepid Dr. Schneider follows Louise to her tomb and impales the

vampire vixen. Schneider also kills Corinne. With all his maidens of the night dead, Mr. Fangs decides to bite Peter's young daughter. Although weak, Wolfgang averts this tragedy by jabbing two iron spikes into the vampire's chest.

It should come as no surprise to veterans of foreign fare that *The Slaughter of the Vampires* is beset by juvenile dubbing. The English script is full of insipid dialogue that is pretty funny (so what else is new?). When Louise is slow to unlock her door, Wolfgang mutter "I must confess I was afraid for a moment." Uh-huh. The U.S. version is also fairly nil in the area of character development, failing to give Eppler's vampire any background. Unless I missed it, I don't think Eppler's character even has a name. It is quite possible *Slaughter* was cut by the distributor for its American release, but the narrative contains a few surprises. Dr. Schneider is unable to save Louise, so all is not rosy for Wolfgang at the conclusion of the film. It was nice to see Wolfgang kill the vampire too. I expected Doc Schneider to do the honors. And here's a vampire film without bats!

From a physical standpoint, Graziella Granata is the most arresting performer. Granata emits a sexual aura that could melt ice. On several occasions, writer-director Roberto Mauri lets the camera linger on Graziella as her ample, protruding breasts heave. I'm not sure if this has some symbolic significance, but it's pleasing in a hormonal way. Too bad little time is devoted to Granata's vampire exploits, as she is most seductive in the role. Dieter Eppler doesn't have the commanding screen presence of Christopher Lee, or the charisma of German Robles, but he's an adequate movie vampire. Walter Brandi is his usual handsome, amiable hero. Brandi handles the final battle against Eppler with proper ardor. Although not as animated as Peter Cushing (for my two cents, the best hero in all horror movie land), Paolo Solvay brings a distinguished quality to Dr. Schneider. Solvay, whose real name is Luigi Batzella, later became a director and was at the helm of *The Devil's Wedding Night*, *Desert Tigers* and *SS Hell Camp*. The latter two are Nazi sickies he directed under the name Ivan Katansky.

Director Roberto Mauri is skillful, with the film's visual content achieving several good scenes such as a traveling shot of a fast-moving carriage and some wonderfully slow camera pans. This is nicely offset by Ugo Brunnelli's scrumptious b&w photography (Brunnelli also photographed *The Playgirls and the Vampire*). Mauri went on to direct *The Saracens* (with Richard Harrison), the dumb-fun classic *The King of Kong Island* (with Brad Harris), a series of '70s westerns with Vassili Karis (one of which is *He was Called the Holy Ghost*), *Madeleine anatomia di un incubo* (with Camille Keaton) in '76, and *La vendetta e il mio perdono* (with Erika Blanc). Aldo Piga (*The Saracens*) provides *Slaughter's* average score.

Opposite page: U.S. ad mat for Piero Regnoli's *The Playgirls and the Vampire* with Walter Brandi and Lyla Rocco (the director's wife).

5 PLAYGIRLS WALKED INNOCENTLY INTO HIS ARMS
...only to meet the devil in the flesh!

An unusual
story of
unnatural
love
and desire
...so bold,
so shocking
—it must
be shown to

**ADULTS
ONLY!**

**"THE
Playgirls
AND THE
Vampire"**

*She knew...
when she felt
his lips on her,
that there was
no other man
for her...
if this was a man!*

ALL NEW!

A Richard Gordon Presentation
A Fanfare Films Release

THEATRE

If you hate Italian vampire films, *The Slaughter of the Vampires* probably will not convert you. However, if you're curious (or a Euro-film completist), then *Slaughter* should provide some entertainment on a late Saturday night.

—Conrad Widener

LOVE LETTERS OF A PORTUGUESE

NUN (1976)

aka *Die Liebesbriefe einer portugiesischen Nonne*

(No U.S. video release)

"You should always do what the old devil says."

—A Satan worshipping sister
in *Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun*

THE BULK OF SPANISH AUTEUR JESS FRANCO'S filmography is not known for innate beauty. His movies unflinchingly leer at amoral human activity, providing unhealthy entertainment for an amazed audience. With well over a hundred feature films (and alternative editions) completed since 1959, Franco is often compromised by rushed production schedules. The haphazard, murky "style" endemic to his later movies (such as *Les possédés du diable/Lorna l'exorciste* [1974], and the notorious *Greta*, *Haus ohne Männer/Wanda, die Wicked Warden/Ilsa—Absolute Power* [1977]) contributed to the ugliness of their misogynistic subject matter.

Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun delivers better-than-average Franco design while catering to his usual whims. The twitchy editing, overzealous zoom lens usage, lethargic pacing and visual staleness which made many of the Spaniard's films unattractively amateurish is replaced by a cinematic flourish; this smoothly directed period piece also benefits from good use of location footage and music. Alternatively entitled *Confessioni proibite di una monaca adolescente* (Italian) and *Tuhansien himojen hoostari* (Finnish), the film explores little new ground for Franco or the genre, but it is nonetheless diverting.

Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun is set during an era of omnipresent religious oppression. Multipurpose Inquisitions were developed by the Catholic church in Spain and Portugal to suppress "heretic" beliefs, including Judaism and Islamic theologies. Even divergent Christian orders such as the Jesuits (also known as the Society of Jesus) were targeted by the Inquisitions around the 16th century. Self righteous Church officials, with the permission of royalty who wanted to maintain control over their kingdoms, felt justified in using torture and imprisonment. Movies ranging from *The Conqueror Worm/The Witchfinder General* (1968), *Hexen bis ans blut gequält/Austria 1700/Mark of the Devil* (1969), *Satan's Skin/Blood on Satan's Claw* (1970), *Flavia la monaca musulmana/Flavia the Heretic* (1974), *La chiesa/The Church* (1989), to even *Nightbreed* (1990) chronicle other, equally horrible, instances of religious persecution.

In Portugal, the voyeuristic Father Vincent (William Berger) berates sixteen year old Marie (Susan Hemingway) for flirting with her boyfriend Chris in the woods. The girl's mother is persuaded to send Marie to the church cloister of Serradayresin, where Father Vincent serves as confessor. He claims mother's savings as an abbey contribution. When they finally arrive, Father Vincent gloats over the beauty of Serradayresin. Hunched nearby like a waiting hawk is the Grand Inquisitor's castle, home of the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition.

The newly arrived novice is contemptuously greeted by "Her Most Eminent Priestess," Abbess Alma. Later, the older woman fingers Marie's genitalia to confirm virginity. The girl is then placed in a room for three days. After seventy two hours, Father Vincent revels in Marie's sins. A crossview of the confession booth catches the growing excitement racking his body at the erotic secrets of the novice. Father Vincent's climactic moans echo across the giggling congregation.

After a few run-ins, however, the Abbess concludes that it is time to purify the girl... through pain. With Father Vincent observing, Marie is stripped naked. Coils of thorns are tightened around her breasts and soft tummy. The Abbess saws the toothy foliage into the moaning novice's flesh.

Yet, a few hours later, "Her Most Eminent Priestess" calls on the devil while she and two younger nuns midwife a thrashing comrade. The girls lick their charge's sweaty bare legs while the Abbess recalls the Satanic impregnation ceremony which left the nun in this state.

Simultaneously to these events, Marie is wracked with nightmares that seem less like fantasy than red-tinted premonitions — as leering Satanists gather round, a crimson robed Father Vincent devil assaults her, digging hairy claws into Marie's youthful pubes...

Suddenly, this demonic hedonism shatters into visions of the Inquisition. Suspected heretics (female, of course — this is a Jess Franco film) are mutilated in the name of God, one unfortunate woman has her reddening head grinded in a tightening vice...

Marie's lover, Chris, covertly visits the re-awakened girl. Pledging love for God, Marie sends her bewildered boyfriend away. Father Vincent and the Abbess wile away the time by hosting an orgy. Lustful moans from these latest unholy activities shudder through the building. Now Marie knows for sure what kind of people she lives among.

After additional humiliating encounters with her superiors, the novice scripts a letter requesting help from mother. She gives it to a friendly nun for mailing. The Abbess obtains the missive and burns it up. Wary of the intolerant Inquisition, the two unholy folk punish Marie by locking her in a caged box. Father Vincent finally decides to sacrifice the girl's innocence. He forces the frightened female to fellate him. As the Father's excitement explodes, water surges outside. A heavenly choir fills the soundtrack.

Marie is unwillingly led into another fetid orgy. A red-robed incarnation of Satan, gazing out from Father

Vincent's eyes, rapes her. White-clad neophytes collapse on the floor, gripping breasts or masturbating with crucifixes.

Marie awakens delirious in her cage. After getting paroled from that prison, the girl musters up the strength to run toward a village. Though skeptical, the corpulent mayor, Don Antonio, carries her to an audience with the Grand Inquisitor. Exhausted, Marie falls asleep on the journey. She awakens back at the Serradaryesin abbey, Antonio bows to Father Vincent and Alma. After a flesh-popping bout of torture, Marie is given to the Inquisition for disposal (a foolish move, as it complicated this problem for the Satanists — they should have taken care of the girl themselves). The grim-faced churchmen will save the young woman's soul by destroying her.

Prince Manuel Gonzales of Portugal and his retainer glimpse Marie in the caravan heading toward the huge castle. The Inquisitors brush right through the Prince's orders to halt. He condemns them as witch-burning fanatics (King Philip II of Spain [1556-1598] and many other European monarchs were not so liberal; they used religious intolerance to protect their thrones).

Confronted by the Monsignor and his brother sadists, Marie pleads guilty to their charges of witchery. She links Father Vincent and the Abbess to Satanism, however. Unless Marie recants her accusations, a public inquiry will be made into the cloister's activities. The Inquisition must investigate any rumor, no matter how unbelievable, of heresy.

In the dungeon, a bloodied woman is spread-eagled meat on a cross. Other victims await similar rending treatment. Nude on a rack, Marie resists joint tearing efforts to coerce her into recanting the statements against the abbey. "Her Most Eminent Priestess" starts caressing the nun's fair skin with a lit torch. Screaming, Marie signs a statement recanting her accusations. The Monsignor tells the girl that her soul will soon be saved (but neglects to mention that Marie's body must be charred to ashy mush).

In a cell, the nun rises as the former sentence is pronounced. "You will be burned at the stake in a public place. God bless you."

"Oh no," Marie moans, "God help me."

Meanwhile, Prince Manuel and his companion discuss the Inquisitor's castle from a road nearby, contempt in their voices. Marie drops a painfully written letter out her window, unknowingly attracting Manuel's attention. He reads the missive. It is addressed to God and reveals all of her story.

Early the next day, crowds gather ominously in the castle square. The good citizens await their entertainment as Marie is roped to a stake. Tinder is ignited at her bare feet. . .

Suddenly, Prince Manuel and his soldiers break through the mob. While freeing Marie, he denounces Father Vincent and the Abbess as the genuine culprits. The Prince commands, "We insist that the true devil worshippers will burn instead."

The perverted pair flee, only to be recaptured by

Manuel's men. Their last few days will be filled with excruciating dawn-to-dusk pain. Father Vincent and "Her Most Eminent Priestess" may welcome the oblivion the cleansing flames will send their bodies into. . .

Available in English with Finnish subtitles, this version of *Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun*, conveys its sordid storyline through admittedly lush visuals. Franco and cinematographer Peter Baumgartner bend what could have been standard historic exploitation into an appreciation of nature. Woodland horseplay between Marie and her friend prologues the film. Sly Father Vincent serves as the Serpent in Eden (thanks to him, the girl is banished from paradise to a literal Hell). Much later, the nun's only freedom is obtained in the forest she flees through; the environment is never menacing and ivory swans float over a nearby pond (consider how filmmakers as subjective as Val Lewton or Mario Bava would have darkened this scene into a living nightmare).

Father Vincent and the Abbess elect to meet their opposite extremes, the Inquisitors, on neutral territory, preparatory to handing Marie over; the two groups discuss business on a brilliant green field, untarnished by human corruption. Contrasted with the abbey and the castle, the countryside offers brief moments of placidity to cast and viewers. This is a concession that Franco, usually concerned with squeezing as much depravity as he can into a film's running time, rarely offers his audience.

The very structure of the movie is influenced by its rural sensibilities. *Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun* is divided into book-like chapters; pastoral interludes separate the major dramatic exchanges. During these moments, Franco usually focuses on the purely natural aspects of the land, the better to exaggerate the surrounding interpersonal mayhem. This strategy is evident after the Satanic orgies and Inquisition-sponsored torture set-pieces — images of mirror-surfaced lakes and fields of yellow flowers immediately follow the sex and blood.

Franco does fall back on his usual standbys when populating *Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun*. The incredibly youthful, but uninhibited, Susan Hemingway stars as an innocent caught between two equally vicious forces. The fear, humiliation, rape and torture Marie experiences anticipates Jess Franco's claustrophobic prison yarns, from *Ilse-Absolute Power to Sadomania/Hellhole Women* [1980]. German actor William Berger essayed the role of a twisted Father figure, one in a long chain of paternal pervers who haunt the Spaniard's work. Franco regulars Howard Vernon and Paul [Eugenie Desade [1970]] Muller played similar frightening fathers. With respect to her station in life, the Abbess (Frida Kargas) is another of Franco's usual female fatales, be they witches, murderesses, succubi or vampiresses; the woman barely clothes a love for Lucifer in Christian ritual. Upon meeting her, we know Marie will be in for a difficult time at the cloister.

"You'll be allowed no wants or desires other than those we allow you."

—The late Abbess from the Serradaryesin cloister

—Jeff Segal



BLOOD BATH

The Elizabeth Bathory Legend on Videotape

by Bob Sargent

WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF VLAD THE IMPALER (AND MAYBE THE Marquis de Sade), you would be hard-pressed to find a more infamous historical personage than that of Elizabeth Bathory (perhaps better known as "The Bloody Countess"). The quest for eternal beauty — and consequently youth — is not an entirely new concept (remember Ponce de Leon and his search for the elusive fountain?), but pursuing it at the cost of innocent human lives (particularly [and tragically] virgins, who have yet to experience all that life has to offer) adds a macabre new dimension to say the very least. Here was a non-fictional character that was practically readymade for the horror film market (and one that plenty of production companies took full [and profitable] advantage of).

The real Elizabeth Bathory (born in 1560) was of ranking royalty in Hungary, and married Count Ferencz Nadasy at the early age of fifteen. During her teenage years, she was preoccupied with the pleasures of the flesh, while her servants catered to her every wish inside her Castle Csejthe. As the story goes, around the age of twenty she began to exhibit signs of having developed some decidedly unwholesome tastes (supplemented by her mile-wide mean-streak). Her husband, having returned from fighting with the Turks, brought her a rare document detailing all manner of ancient sadistic tortures, which Elizabeth studied with an intensity that bordered on obsession. Sicker still, she was fond of flagellation — a painful practice she learned from a masochistic aunt — and had her servants whip her for hours on end. All historical accounts depict her as a dark and attractive woman, so it

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The
**DEVIL'S
WEDDING
NIGHT**

**DARK DESIRES
UNLEASH THE LEGIONS
OF LUCIFER!**

Starring **MARK DAMON • ROSALBA NERI**

Produced by RALPH ZUCKER - Directed by PAUL SOLVAY - Screenplay by PAUL BRUNT and FRANK SIMPSON

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stands to reason that she took more than a few lovers up until the untimely death of her husband in 1604, at which time her mind snapped. Perhaps due to her newly-acquired erratic sleep patterns (personality changes can sometimes be attributed to sleep deprivation), or her already unbalanced emotional nature, she was suddenly ordering her servants to walk about the castle naked, and demanded that she only be fed exotic fruits from the Middle East. When a serving girl once mistakenly brought the countess some common apples, the increasingly unstable Elizabeth flew into such a berserk fury that she struck the girl, drawing blood with a large ring she wore. Some of the blood had splashed onto her face. Annoyed at first, this quickly changed to amazement, for when she wiped it off, she noticed the rejuvenating effect it had on her aging complexion. The skin on the spot had become young again, and she became convinced that youth could be maintained eternally if she regularly bathed in the fresh blood of virgins!

Sending out her palace guardsmen, they had orders to search the countryside and kidnap as many peasant girls as they could. Once brought back to the castle, the abducted girls — if proven virgins — were strung-up by their ankles over the countess' private bath, their throats cut, and their red stuff drained. The bloodless corpses were then removed by terrified followers who — fearing for their own lives and doing whatever she asked — stashed them in the catacombs beneath the castle.

She kept this practice up for years, with her aides murdering scores of young girls to satisfy her demand for human blood. It was only in her own demented mind that the baths were having the desired effect, as everyone else saw her for the aging despot she had become. But during one fateful moment, reality struck like a lightning bolt, and she saw herself for the old crone she really was. Screaming to her most lunatic servants that it was the QUALITY of the blood that was missing, she then hit upon what was perhaps the most insidious chapter of her entire criminal career. Rather than bathe in the blood of inferior humans, why not obtain the blood of aristocrats? Surely this would restore her youth! And so she set about



Don't be afraid Erzebet. You are not afraid of death. . . only of old age! However the youthfulness under your smooth skin fears not even that. Your life can go so quickly, in only a second — one tiny second!

Queen: Eszteracs Szentesi to Lucia Bood (from *The Female Butcher*). Illustration: Delphine Seyrig and Andrea Rasi, as interpreted by Neil Vokes (from *Daughters of Darkness*).

making arrangements to draw twenty five of the prettiest young daughters of her blueblooded peers into her clutches. She advertised throughout Hungary that she would tutor them in social graces. Since her heinous crimes had been carried out in secret, no one was the wiser, and seeing as the Countess Bathory was one of the wealthiest and most powerful persons in the country, members of the lower nobility jumped at the chance to further their own political and economic positions, and unknowingly shipped their own daughters to their doom in 1609.

Initially, Elizabeth pretended to conduct her etiquette classes by day, while her thugs one-by-one murdered the sleeping girls at night (and then drained them for the countess' gory morning baths). Foolishly, the same aides carelessly tossed the bodies over the castle walls, instead of taking the usual precaution of stashing them in the relatively secure passages below. (Some accounts suggest this was done on purpose to bring the countess' activities under public — and official — scrutiny.) Naturally, the peasants found and identified the bodies, and the game was up.

News of the murders spread like wildfire, and a public outcry brought about the arrests of Bathory's most trusted aides, including the captain of the palace guard and the cruel Dorotta Szentes. But Bathory herself, being royalty and therefore immune from prosecution, could not be brought to trial under Hungarian law. Fearing outright rebellion from an outraged populace, the Hungarian Parliament hurriedly passed a special law, giving the authorities the opening they needed to arrest her.

Her servants were found guilty, tortured, and burned alive at the stake. Elizabeth, who was convicted of murdering what may have been as many as 600 or 700 young girls, could not be executed in such a prescribed manner, so she was confined to her suite within her castle and walled-up there, with only a small opening left through which she was fed her meals. She died screaming three years later, begging to be released. Historical accounts state that when the wall was broken down and officials stepped inside, one of them went on record describing her corpse as "a creature so hideous as to make Evil itself cringe."

What follows are some of the standout examples, for better AND for worse, of how the legend translated onto the big screen (or the little screen, in the case of those

Previous page: U.S. one sheet for Peola Solvay's *The Devil's Wedding Night* with Rosalind Neri and Mark Damon.



Another shot of the demonic festivities from whipping-boy Paolo Solvay's off-beat *The Devil's Wedding Night*.

who are catching-up with some of these now).

Countess Dracula (1970) Frustratingly still unavailable on video in the United States, this was Hammer's take on the legend. Directed by Peter Sasdy, it benefitting greatly from the presence of Ingrid Pitt in the title role. Noted Hammer film expert Dick Klemensen was able to supply me with all kinds of juicy tidbits regarding this film. For instance, did you know that a portion of Ingrid Pitt's dialogue was dubbed? [She was furious when she found out.] Or that Ms. Pitt actually visited the place where the countess was said to have been walled-up and left to die? Her screams were supposed to be heard during the night (no doubt heavily promoted by the Hungarian tourist board), but Ingrid heard nothing.

Non-TV prints of *Countess Dracula* sport a little nudity (involving some of the victims, and the inevitable bath sequence) and a little extra bloodletting (particularly in the case of Nike Arrighi's harrowing murder, and a peasant being crushed beneath the wheels of a carriage), but it's the story that's so engrossing here, as the aging countess impersonates her own daughter (sending the poor thing — essayed by Lesley-Anne Down — into virtual exile while she trysts with a young suitor who was intended for her offspring). Complications arise and the ending, while tragic, is fitting.

Daughters of Darkness (*La rouge aux levres*, 1971) One of the perks of writing an article like this is being

"forced" to re-watch a marvelous film like this one. With a minimal cast and liberal use of bright color, director Harry Krumel delivers a more modern interpretation of the Bathory legend that is as pleasing to the eye as it is entertaining. John Karlen (*Night of Dark Shadows*, *Phenomenal* and *The Treasure of Tutankamen*) is excellent as the husband who — along with his wife — is seduced by a sequin-clad Delphine Seyrig (*Donkey Skin*, *Last Year at Marienbad*) as the deadly Countess. The seductive Andrea Rau (*Jailbreak in Hamburg*) is along for the ride as the Countess' faithful companion/servant. The location for the film couldn't have been better, as the vast emptiness of the vacant hotel — with its cavernous dining halls and lonely beaches — leave a deliciously unsettling impression on even the most jaded of scare-seekers! Available on the Continental label.

The Female Butcher (*Ceremonia sangrienta*, 1972) You know this is a horror movie within the first five minutes. . . and what a movie! Jorge Grau delivers the goods on the Bathory legend with style and panache! And with such a first rate cast, how can he go wrong? This time, it's former Italian beauty queen Lucia Bosé (*Arcana*, *Something Creeping in the Dark*) as the despicable aristocrat — in actuality a descendant of the original (and more infamous) Elizabeth — who takes up the practices of her predecessor in order to preserve her own youth. Espartaco Santoni (*Lisa and the Devil*, *The House of*

Insane Women) is remarkably sinister as her husband Karl (whose voice is done by the same dubbing artist I've heard do Paul Naschy on countless occasions), Ewa Aulin (*Death Smiles on a Murderer, Plucked*) is at her sensuous best as the virginal (!) Marina, and Silvano Tranquilli (*Web of the Spider, The Horrible Dr. Hichcock*) puts in a respectable performance, appearing as Dr. Zylus, the sole voice of reason at a vampire's trial! Good Spanish secondary players include the old crone at the tavern and former owner of the cursed medallion, played by Lola Gaos (from Naschy's *Latidos de pánico*). And let's not forget the other top-drawer people behind the camera, Fernando Arribas' photography and Carlo Savina's score are two major contributing factors to the success of this picture.

Bosé makes for an extremely convincing countess (that first scene where she smears a child's freshly-drawn blood onto her face is truly chilling) but the twist here is the character of Karl (whose death is faked so he can take to kidnapping chaste young women — cutting their throats to fill the countess' bath). Unfortunately, the only version of this that most of a new generation of horror fanatics has seen is the butchered print — although it does contain some graphic bloodletting and fleeting nudity — put out on video in the U.S. by Simitar Entertainment as *The Legend of Blood Castle*. If you're willing to go the extra mile, Blood Times Video offers a 93 minute Italian version called *Le vergini cavalcano la morte* that sports more sex and violence (including an especially nasty scene where Espartaco Santoni stabs a pretty blonde peasant girl in the throat while making love to her in her bed). While many critics seem to consider this film to be the "best" interpretation of the legend, I disagree. For my money, the Hammer version manages to better capture the "feel" of what the Bathory experience might have been like, but the definitive version has yet to be made.

The Devil's Wedding Night (*Il plenimio delle vergine*, 1973) This Italian variation on the legend has too many detractors, which is a shame because I suspect it has caused more than one budding horror fan who hasn't seen it to dismiss it out of hand. Never listen to critics! I'm here to defend *The Devil's Wedding Night* as a perfectly enjoyable piece of Euro-trash if viewed while in the right mood. If not only for the sex scenes between Rosalba Neri and Mark Damon (or Neri and Esmarelda Barros, depending on how your tastes run), there's all the Gothic



Religious bastards! I'll return again. I'll rise from my ashes and convert your god-fearing world into an inferno of death and blood!

Quote: Julia Sely to her executioners (from *The Crowding*). Illustration: Rosalba Neri, as interpreted by Neil Vokes (from *The Devil's Wedding Night*).

FRONT of the camera. Behind the scenes, you have the support of some old hands like Aristide Massaccesi (doing the cinematography honors) and actor Walter Brandi (*Vampire and the Ballerina, Bloody Pit of Horror*) working in a production capacity.

Immoral Tales (*Contes immoraux*, 1974) Sleaze masquerades as art! Paloma Picasso has just the right look for a marvelously eerie countess in the third segment of this four-part anthology film which sports minimal dialogue and mass quantities of nudity. The scene where she actually climbs into the tub is pretty chilling, especially since it's (more or less) left to your imagination how they filled it up (as none of the captured virgins are exsanguinated on-screen). I only wish it was longer because as it stands now, it's woefully underdeveloped. Picasso seems to have had a VERY brief film career (to my knowledge, one appearance to date), and yes, she IS the more famous Pablo's daughter (for those of you who were wondering like me — I ran over to the Library of Congress to confirm it). At one time Europe's leading animator, Polish-born director Walerian Borowczyk (pronounced "Boroff-chick") has been making live-action films on and off since 1953, and has an impressive filmography (including, but not limited to, *The Beast* and *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mrs. Osbourne*).

Mama Dracula (1980) I've never said this in anything I've written before but, I HATED THIS FILM! I was so angry at having wasted 90 minutes of my time watching this inexcusably lame attempt at a horror-comedy that I almost threw the cassette against a brick wall after ejecting it from my VCR! The only things *Mama Dracula* had going for it were the atmospheric photography and sumptuous locations, but even these were utterly ruined by the Harold Lloyd lookalike male lead and the unbearable

trappings to recommend it (an old castle, misty crypts, open graves, vampire bats, etc.). Rosalba Neri (*The Seducers, Lady Frankenstein*) is always fun to watch, and she's looking quite fetching here, striking unbelievable nude poses during the inevitable bath scene which is pure-distilled essence of exploitation. Spaghetti Western vet Mark Damon (*Crypt of the Living Dead, The Great Treasure Hunt*) plays twins, and neither hurts nor hinders the experience. Esmarelda Barros (*The King of Kong Island, Even Django Has His Price*), as the icy-yet-busty servant, never fails to please... and, that's just some of the personnel in



Unmoralische Geschichten

Ein Film von Walerian Borowczyk mit Paloma Picasso

Evil, androgynous hunch-person and naked, screaming tub-fodder in Walerian Borowczyk's trashy-but-enjoyable Immoral Tales.

antics of the thoroughly annoying Wajnberg twins (Marc-Henri and Alexandre). Louise Fletcher (*Flowers in the Attic*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*) was miscast and — while she struggles gamely — half the time looks lost in this hopeless Belgian export. The only spark comes out of a gag revolving around a fashion boutique run by the aforementioned [vampire] brothers, where they abduct topless virgins from the changing rooms to feed the Countess' bath. French actress Maria Schneider, who has no other horror credits unless you count Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* — where she has to have sex with an aging Marlon Brando — is completely wasted here in her role as a police detective.

The Craving (*El retorno del hombre lobo*, 1980) This picture bankrupted director Jacinto Molina Alvarez/Paul Naschy's production company Dalmata, which is in a way ironic because it's probably his best-looking werewolf film (especially in the make-up department). One of these days, a complete print will turn up, but for now, the scissored version of this film on Vestron Video will have to do. The story begins with the 16th century execution of Countess Elizabeth Bathory (Julia Saly) and her evil min-

ions, including Waldemar Daninsky (Naschy) who is laid to rest after a silver cross pierces his heart. They're all revived in modern times to wreak havoc, with the Bathory character as a full-fledged vampire (the bathing-in-blood-to-stay-young angle kind of goes right out the window, but there is a gory scene where the red stuff is poured all over her). Interestingly, some historical accounts espouse the notion that the real Elizabeth Bathory actually adopted vampiric practices — going so far as to drink the blood of her hapless victims in her quest for eternal youth, and the Naschy film (whether it's intentional or not) is one of the few cinematic translations to date which plays off this angle. Saly (real name: Julia Salinero) was a popular flamenco dancer, known professionally as "La Pocha," before she became an actress, whereupon she shortened her real name to the more internationally-suited Julia Saly, though for years after that in Spain, "La Pocha" usually followed her name in parenthesis because of the recognition value. The film also boasts cameos by Riccardo Palacios (as a graverobber) and Narciso Ibañez-Menta (as an invalid who gets garroted by a sadistic Silvia Aguilar [*El caminante*, *Human Beasts*]). ■



Suzy Kendall

Actress

A FORMER FABRIC DESIGNER AND FASHION MODEL, Suzy Kendall was born Frieda Harrison in Belper, England (1944). Starting in the mid-sixties, she played the leads in many British and other European co-productions, including Peter Collinson's psycho-thriller *The Penthouse* (1967). Based on C. Scott Forbes' stageplay "The Meter Man," it's the tale of two deranged hoods, and the sadism they inflict upon two trapped apartment-dwellers. The film played to excellent reviews but, frustratingly, still remains elusive on video.

Ms. Kendall has worked with some of the finest directors in the business, and horror film fans probably know her best from Dario Argento's *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (1970), as frantic girlfriend to persecuted Tony Musante. She ran into more trouble with psychopaths in Sergio Martino's *Torso* (1973). Here, our favorite blonde

outmaneuvers a demented John Richardson.

Freddie Francis' *Craze* (1974) found Suzy as a kinky call girl (wearing a curly brunette wig) in among other Euro-starlets who were paraded-out and murdered by nutty Jack Palance in the name of a bloodthirsty African idol. In the atypical Umberto Lenzi thriller *Spasmo* (1975), she played opposite Robert Hoffman's perplexed protagonist, and was unquestionably at the height of her physical attractiveness.

With nearly two dozen feature films to her credit, her last role appears to have been Stanley Long's *Adventures of a Private Eye* (1977), a British sex-comedy, after which she returned to the fashion industry full-time. It's also well-documented that, for a time, she was married to insufferable midget comedian Dudley Moore (but we won't hold that against her, will we?). ■



VAMPIRES

Tim Greaves

118 High Street, Eastleigh, Hampshire;
SO5 5LR, ENGLAND

NOW THIS IS REALLY HOT! TIM GREAVES IS TO BE commended for putting together what I consider essential reading for any José Larraz fan! (With a foreword penned by the man himself, no less!) Total coverage — surely the definitive work! — of the 1974 cult film *Vampyres* includes behind-the-scenes pix, biographical data, interviews, copious amounts of incisive analysis, and some great trivia to boot! (Anulka's last name is Dziubinska! [No wonder she shortened it to just Anulka!]) If you're a fan of erotic horror — and this movie seems to top just about everybody's list! — then you owe it to yourself to write Tim and order a copy before these sell out. \$7 (postpaid) U.S. or £2.50 (postpaid) in the U.K.

GIALLO PAGES

John Martin

29 Westland Avenue, Hucknall, Nottingham;
NG15 6FW, ENGLAND

WITHOUT-A-DOUBT, THIS IS THE BEST NEW ZINE TO come out of England in years! How can you argue with such a candid David Warbeck interview (Mimsy Farmer "was an odd bitch"), a tribute to Edwige Fenech (complete with racy photos), and reviews of off-the-beaten-path Italian films like Fulci's *Contraband*? It's a Euro-addict's dream-come-true! Printed on slick papers and full-sized, I can hardly wait for the second issue to come out! Contact John and reserve one for yourself today!

BLOOD TIMES

Louis Paul

P.O. Box 3340, Steinway Station,
Long Island City, NY 11103-0340, U.S.A.

THIS IS THE KIND OF ZINE THAT I KEEP FOREVER (as a reference work). I'm still turning back to the '60s Euro-spy special (Volume 2, Number 1), because the information contained therein is invaluable to those of us who are interested in this kind of stuff! I know Louis puts in long hours compiling his data, so BLOOD TIMES is a

real steal at only \$3 [U.S.]. And sure enough, he does it again in Volume 2, Number 2, with a comprehensive list of every Edgar Wallace film there ever was! (Go ahead, just try to name one he missed!) Louis deserves your dollars, so show some support by breaking out that check-book.

ASIAN EYE

Colin Geddes

253 College Street # 108, Toronto, Ontario;
M5T 1R5, CANADA

JOINING THE EVER-GROWING CADRE OF FILM zines covering exclusively Asian fare is this sparkling example. The impressive 76-page first issue is packed with reviews of everything from the more recent wave of Hong Kong product (like *Black Cat*) to vintage Shaw stuff (such as *The Flying Guillotine* [with Chen Kuan-Tai]). Tsui Hark, Ringo Lam, John Woo and Jackie Chan are profiled, there are dozens of fun little illustrations to break up the text, and captioned photographs identifying the various stars and directors are sprinkled liberally throughout. Bravo Colin! Single copies of this *magnum opus* go for \$5 (plus \$2 postage if you're in the U.S.).

SUB-TERRENEA

Jason Gray

47 Thorncliffe Park Drive, Apartment 609,
Toronto, Ontario; M4H 1J5, CANADA

NOW IN ITS NINTH ISSUE, THIS HEARTY CANADIAN-based publication is like an old friend to long-suffering connoisseurs of trashy cinema. While still providing updates on the George Hilton filmography (see Jason's previous issue), this one has a generous assortment of reviews — including some of the newer hyper-violent releases from the East like *Dr. Lamb* and *Run and Kill* (both with the incredible Simon Yam) — plus fanzine reviews, interviews and a rather informative regular column called "The Toronto Video Scene" that can even be of use to those of us who don't live there (and thanks for the tip regarding those *Mad Foxes* running times [it's nice to know the version I have is uncut!]). Jason knows what he's talking about, and his love for it shows, so do the right thing by dropping him a line without delay.



Something Reliable

IF IMAGE IS everything, then SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO has it all sewn-up in that department. The last three titles I ordered (The *Killer Snakes*, *The Seducers* and *A Tale of Torture*) [a really gorgeous print of the uncut *Bloody Pit of Horror*] all came in nice, hard-plastic boxes with color wraparound art.

Better still, SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO scored high marks on service, as all of the aforementioned tapes arrived in about two weeks. (When you've been put through the ringer by other video mail order houses as many times as I have, that's pretty damned refreshing [and THAT alone is almost reason enough to place an order]!)

This outfit's biggest claim to fame has got to be the unearthing of the work of Brazilian filmmaker José Mojica Marins! Mike Vraney is to be commended for making these once-rare titles available on videotape for the first time ever. Mouth-watering selections like *At*

At a Glance

SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO
P.O. Box 33064
Seattle, WA 98133

Pros: Fast, dependable service. Recordings are made on new, assembled tapes. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

Cons: Catalogs aren't free (they cost \$3). SWV video titles superimposed over some opening credits (to discourage pirates).

Midnight I'll Take Your Soul, *Strange World of Coffin Joe*, *Awakenings of the Beast* and *Hallucinations of a Deranged Mind* (all subtitled in English) have long been sought-after by horror fans and collectors alike!

Still not enough? Why not write or call (206/361.3759)

for a copy of their catalog? While a vast majority of their stock consists of nudie-cutie film loops, early American sleaze and the like (see the David Friedman and Johnny Legend collections), some Euro-nuggets can be gleaned from the lists therein, such as *It's Hot in Paradise* and *Sexy prohibitissimo*. And at \$20 (plus postage [pretty much the going rate nowadays]), affordably. ■

The Vraney 5-Star Rating System

- ***** Top-notch, best quality, price and service available
- **** Exceptional, highly recommended
- *** Complaint, worth looking into
- ** Possible, better than nothing
- * Inferior, save your money

Fanex 8

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL convention to be hosted by the Horror and Fantasy Film Society (at the Sheraton North Towson [410/321.7400, room rate is \$73 per night]) is going to be Hammer themed. Special guests scheduled to appear that weekend (July 22-24, 1994) include Martine Beswick, Veronica Carlson, Suzan Farmer and Ingrid Pitt! WOW! Even if I didn't have a car, I think I'd walk for a chance to see some of these favorites! Advance registration continues through April 30, 1994, and only costs \$20 for adults/\$10 for children. Make checks payable to John Stell, 7861 Centergate Court, Pasadena, MD 21122 or call 410/255.5196 for more information. ■

More Pseudonyms

NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN, here's the fourth addendum to our continuing A-Z unraveling of all those confusing stage names. This time, some of the lesser-known Italian directors (in this format: real name first, followed by fake names).

SERGIO GRIECO
Terrence Hathaway

CARLO LIZZANI
Lee W. Beaver

GUIDO MALATESTA
James Reed

STELVIO MASSI
Newman Rostel

CAMILLO MASTROCIINQUE
Thomas Miller

LUTGI RUSSO
John Wilder

ELIO SCARDAMAGLIA
Michael Hamilton
John Oscar

STEFANO VANZINA
Steno

GIUSEPPE VARI
Al Pisani
Joseph Warren

Special Thanks

I WOULD LIKE TO express my appreciation to the following individuals (and my apologies in advance to anyone whom I may have inadvertently missed).

Richard Akiyama, Bill Babouris, Tom Betts, Andy Black, Bill Connolly, Max Della Mora, Harry Dolezal, Steve Fontone, Colin Geddes, Jason Gray, Tim Graves, John Gullidge, Johnny Haelterman, Joe Kane, Dick Klemensen, Craig Ledbetter, Tim and Donna Lucas, John Martin, Carl Morano, Gerard Noel, Louis Paul, Tim Paxton, Peder Pederson, Adrian Smith, Simon Smith, Ray Stewart, Erik Sulev, Tom Weisser, Michael Weldon, Barry Wooldridge (the best friend "zinedom" could ever have), my talented contributors, patient subscribers and supportive distributors worldwide. ■

Acknowledgments

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY of the VIDEOOZE Archives except: Front cover (Harry Dolezal), page 5 (Max Della Mora), page 12 (Lorne Marshall) and page 25 (Harry Dolezal). ■

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R RESTRICTED 20

Naschy junkies, hold onto your hats! Next issue will feature quite-possibly the most comprehensive interview the man has done to date! U.S. ad mat from Carlos Aured's *Los ojos azules de la muñeca rota/The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll* (1972).

